# History of the Park

1

The human history of the Yellowstone region goes back more than 11,000 years. How far back is still to be determined, but humans probably were not here when the entire area was covered by ice caps and glaciers. The last period of ice coverage ended approximately 14,000 years ago—and sometime after that, humans arrived here.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF YELLOWSTONE'S HISTORY**

- People have been in Yellowstone more than 11,000 years, as evidenced by archeological sites, trails, and oral histories.
- Although Sheep Eaters are the most well-known group of Native Americans to use the park, many other tribes and bands lived in and traveled through what is now Yellowstone National Park prior to European American arrival.
- European Americans began exploring Yellowstone in the early 1800s.
- First organized expedition explored Yellowstone in 1870.
- Yellowstone National Park established in 1872.
- Railroad arrived in 1883, allowing easier visitor access.
- The U.S. Army managed the park from 1886 through 1918.
- Automobiles allowed into the park in 1915, making visits easier and more economical.
- First boundary adjustment of the park made in 1929.
- "Leopold Report" released in 1963; its recommendations changed how wildlife is managed in the park.
- 1970: First bear management plan.
- 1988: "Summer of Fire."
- 1995: Wolves restored to the park.

## The Earliest Humans in Yellowstone

Human occupation of the greater Yellowstone area seems to follow environmental changes of the last 15,000 years. Glaciers and a continental ice cap covered most of what is now Yellowstone National Park. They receded approximately 14,000 B.P. (before present) and left behind rivers and valleys that people could follow in pursuit of Ice Age mammals such as the mammoth and the giant bison.

The first people arrived in this region sometime before 10,000 B.P. Archeologists have found little physical evidence of their presence except for their distinctive stone tools and projectile points. From these artifacts, scientists surmise that they hunted mammals and ate berries, seeds, and roots.

As the climate in the Yellowstone region warmed and dried, the animals, vegetation, and human lifestyles also changed. Large Ice Age animals that were adapted to cold and wet conditions became extinct. The glaciers left behind layers of sediment in valleys in which grasses and sagebrush thrived and pockets of exposed rocks that provided protected areas for aspens and fir to grow. The uncovered volcanic plateau sprouted lodgepole forests. By about 7,000 B.P., people had adapted to these changing conditions. They could no longer rely on large mammals for food. Instead, smaller animals such as deer and bighorn sheep became more important in their diet as did plants such as bitterroot and prickly pear. They may have also established a distinct home territory in the valleys and surrounding mountains.

*Knife (9350 B.P.) from the Yellowstone National Park Museum Collection*

# 1

## History of the Park

**PaleoIndian Period** — **Archaic Period**

10,000 B.P. — 9350 B.P. — 7000 B.P.

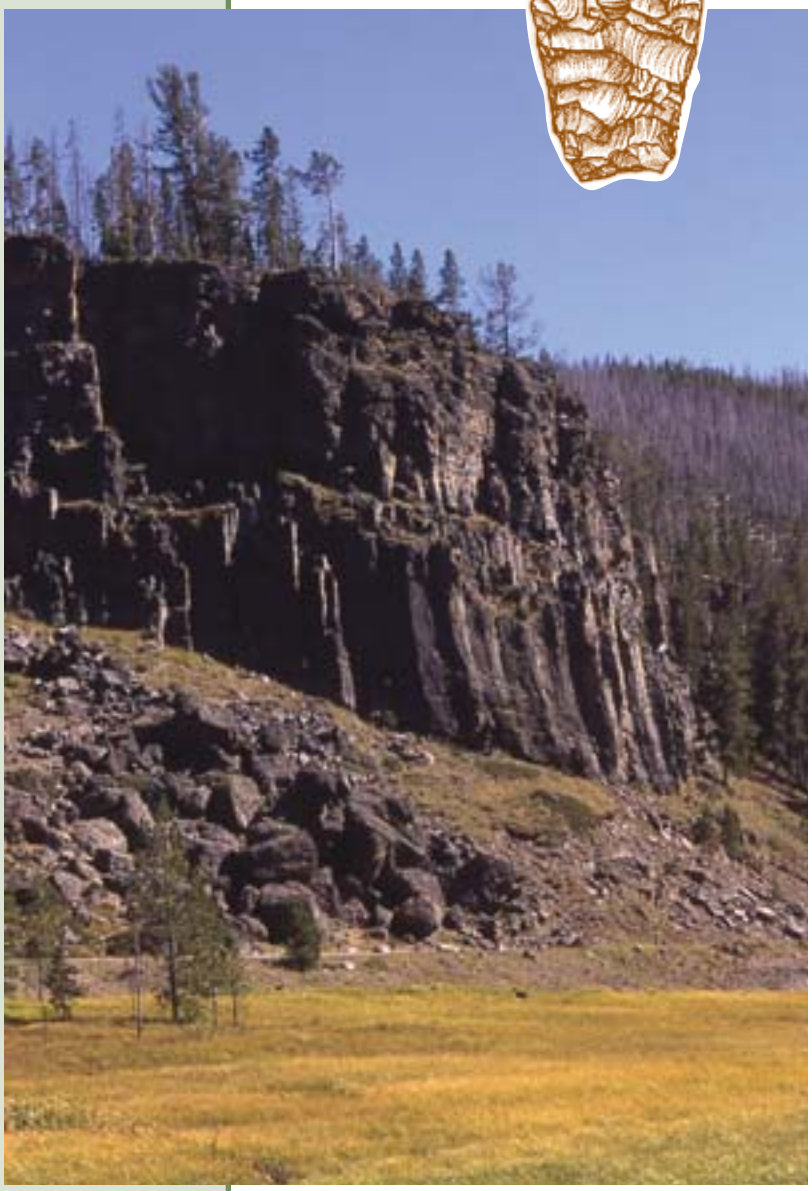
*Folsom people were in the greater Yellowstone area as early as 10,900 B.P—the date of an obsidian Folsom projectile point found near Pinedale, Wyoming.*

*Sites along the Canyon to Lake Road yielded PaleoIndian artifacts.*

*Hell Gap Point, 9600–10,000 B.P.*

*A site on the shore of Yellowstone Lake was investigated in 2000 and dated to 9350 B.P. The points had traces of blood from rabbit, dog, deer, and bighorn. People seem to have occupied this site for short, seasonal periods.*

*Vegetation similar to what we find today begins to appear. Sites reveal earth ovens used for preparing food. Food used included meat, roots, seeds. Projectile points begin to be notched.*



*Obsidian Cliff, a major source of obsidian for western North America, was designated a National Historic Landmark in June 1996.*

This favorable climate would continue more than 9,000 years. Evidence of these people in Yellowstone remained uninvestigated, even long after archeologists began excavating sites elsewhere in North America. Archeologists used to think high regions such as Yellowstone were inhospitable to humans and thus, did little exploratory work in these areas. However, park superintendent Philetus W. Norris (1877–82) found artifacts in Yellowstone and sent them to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Today, archeologists study environmental change as a tool for understanding human uses of areas such as Yellowstone.

About 1,100 sites have been documented in Yellowstone National Park, with the majority from the Archaic period. Sites contain evidence of successful hunts for bison, sheep, and elk.

Campsites and trails in Yellowstone *(see map next page)* also provide evidence of early use. Some trails have been used by people since the PaleoIndian period.

No scientific evidence conclusively connects prehistoric tribes with historic people such as the Crow and Sioux, but oral histories provide links. For example, the oral tradition of the Salish places their ancestors in this region several thousand years ago. The Shoshone say they originated here.

### Increased Use

People seem to have increased their use of the Yellowstone area beginning about 3,000 years ago. They developed the bow and arrow, which replaced the atlatl, or spear-thrower, that had been used for thousands of years. With the bow and arrow, people hunted more efficiently. They also developed sheep traps and bison corrals during this period. Remains of sheep traps are assumed to have existed in the mountains of Yellowstone at least prior to the 1988 fires; bison corrals

*continued on page 20*

Archaic Period — Prehistoric Period

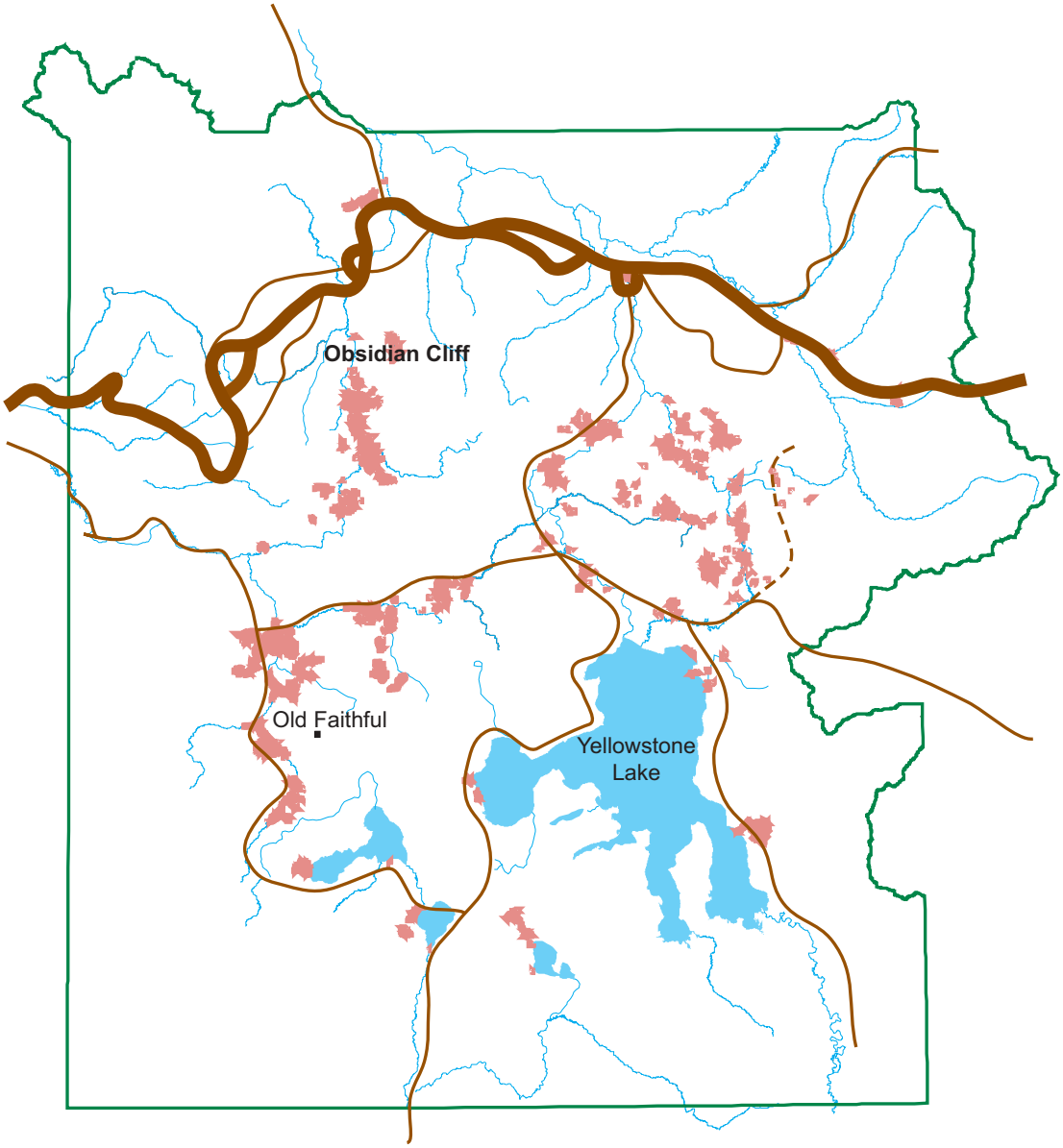
3000 B.P.

1500 B.P.

*Beginning 9000 B.P. until 1000 A.D., people leave traces of camps on shores of Yellowstone Lake.*

*Oral histories of the Salish place their ancestors in the Yellowstone area.*

*After 1500 B.P., bow and arrow replaces atlatl (throwing spear); sheep traps (in the mountains) and bison corrals (on the plains) begin to be used in the Rocky Mountain region.*




## Bannock Trail

*The Bannock Trail probably was used off and on for centuries. Its current name comes from the frequent use in the 1800s by the Bannock, who crossed the Yellowstone Plateau to access the plains east of the park to hunt bison after the animal had been exterminated from the tribe's homeland, the Snake River Plains. They crossed the Yellowstone River upstream from its confluence with Tower Creek. Many people have thought this ford was an ancient crossing. However, archeological investigations have found no evidence of repeated, long-term use. Ethnographers are consulting with tribes to find out if their traditions include information on the ford. (See Chapter 8 for more about archeological and ethnographic approaches to cultural resources.)*

*Map adapted from "Fear or Reverence? Native Americans and the Geysers of Yellowstone," by Joseph Weixelman, Yellowstone Science, Fall 2001.*

## Determining Dates

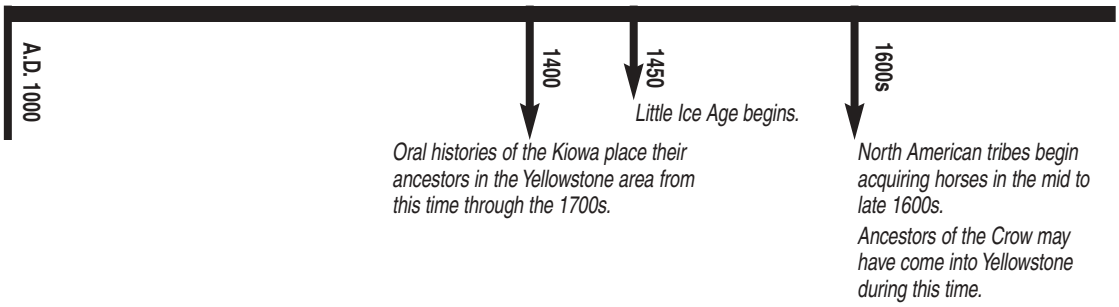
*Archeologists in this region commonly use two techniques to date their findings:*

***Radiocarbon dating** measures the amount of carbon 14 remaining in an organic sample, usually charcoal or bone. Atmospheric radiocarbon enters the life cycle of plants and animals during respiration. After death, carbon 14 no longer enters the organism and begins to decay at a known rate. Sophisticated equipment measures the amount of remaining carbon 14, which is used to calculate the time since death.*

***Obsidian hydration** measures the rate obsidian absorbs water at its surface, which is dependent on temperature. Measuring the thickness of the hydration layer determines an artifact's date of manufacture.*

# 1

## History of the Park




were used in the Yellowstone River valley north of the park.

This increased use of Yellowstone may have occurred when the environment was warmer, favoring extended seasonal use on and around the Yellowstone Plateau. Archeologists and other scientists are working together to study evidence such as plant pollen, landforms, and tree rings to understand how the area's environment changed over time.

### The Little Ice Age

Climatic evidence has already confirmed the Yellowstone area experienced colder temperatures during what is known as the Little Ice Age—mid 1400s to mid 1800s. Archeological evidence indicates fewer people used this region during this time. Campsites appear to have been used by smaller groups of people, mostly in the summer. Such a pattern of use would make sense in a cold region where hunting and gathering were practical for only a few months each year. The Shoshone say family groups came to Yellowstone to gather obsidian, which they used on site to field dress buffalo.

*Tribes used hydrothermal sites ceremonially and medicinally. The Mud Volcano area was especially significant for the Kiowa. Their tradition says that a hot spring called Dragon's Mouth (below) is where their creator gave them the Yellowstone area for their home.*

### Historic Tribes

Tribal oral histories indicate more extensive use during the Little Ice Age. Kiowa stories place their ancestors here from around A.D. 1400 to A.D. 1700. Ancestors to contemporary Blackfeet, Cayuse, Coeur d'Alene, Bannock, Nez Perce, Shoshone, and Umatilla, among others, continued to travel the park on the already established trails. They visited geysers, conducted ceremonies, hunted, gathered plants and minerals, and engaged in trade. Some tribes used the Fishing Bridge area as a rendezvous site.

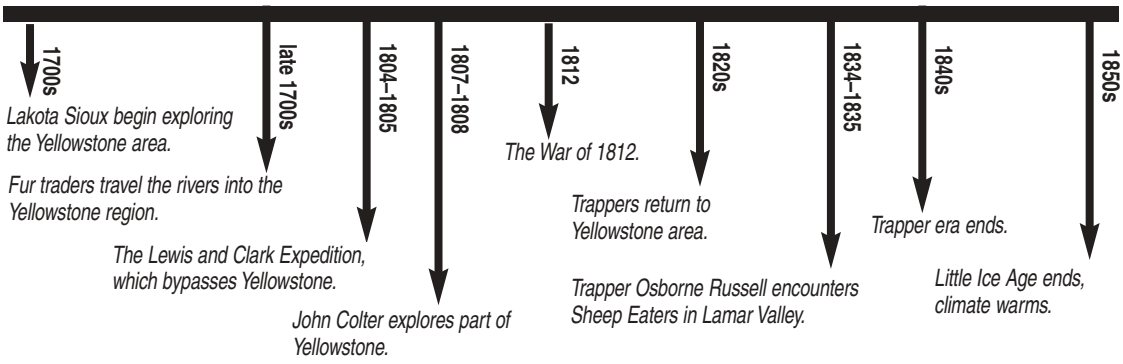
The Crow occupied the country generally east of the park, and the Blackfeet occupied the country to the north. The Shoshone, Bannock, and other tribes of the plateaus to the west traversed the park annually to hunt on the plains to the east. Other Shoshonean groups hunted in open areas west and south of Yellowstone.

In the early 1700s, some tribes in this region began to acquire the horse. Some historians believe the horse fundamentally changed lifestyles because tribes could now travel faster and farther to hunt bison and other animals of the plains. However, the horse does not seem to have changed the tribes' traditional uses of the Yellowstone area.

### The "Sheep Eaters"

Some groups of Shoshone who adapted to a mountain existence chose not to acquire the horse. These included the Sheep Eaters, or Tukudika, who used their dogs to transport food, hides, and other provisions.

Sheep Eaters acquired their name from the bighorn sheep whose migrations they followed. Bighorn sheep were a significant part of their diet, and they crafted the carcasses into a wide array of tools and implements. For example, they made bows from sheep horn made pliable from soaking in hot




springs. They traded these bows, plus clothing and hides, to other tribes.

## European Americans Arrive

In the late 1700s, fur traders traveled the great tributary of the Missouri River, the Yellowstone, in search of Native Americans to trade with. They called the river by its French name, "Roche Jaune." As far as we know, pre-1800 travelers did not observe the hydrothermal activity in this area but they probably learned of these features from Native American acquaintances.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition, sent by President Thomas Jefferson to explore the newly acquired lands of the Louisiana Purchase, bypassed Yellowstone. They had heard descriptions of the region, but did not explore the Yellowstone River beyond what is now Livingston, Montana.

A member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, John Colter, left that group during its return journey to join trappers in the Yellowstone area. During his travels, Colter probably skirted the northwest shore of Yellowstone Lake and crossed the Yellowstone River near Tower Fall, where he noted the presence of "Hot Spring Brimstone."

Not long after Colter's explorations, the United States became embroiled in the War of 1812, which drew men and money away from exploration of the Yellowstone region. The demand for furs resumed after the war and trappers returned to the Rocky Mountains in the 1820s. Among them was Daniel Potts, who also published the first account of Yellowstone's wonders as a letter in a Philadelphia newspaper *(see quote at right).*

Jim Bridger also explored Yellowstone during this time. Like many trappers, Bridger spun tall tales as a form of entertainment around the evening fire. His stories inspired future explorers to discover the truth.

*Wickiups provided temporary shelter for some Native Americans while they were in Yellowstone. A few, probably built in the 1800s, remain standing in the park.*

As quickly as it started, the trapper era ended. By the mid 1840s, beaver became scarce and fashions changed. Trappers turned to guiding or other pursuits.

## Looking for Gold

During 1863–1871, prospectors crisscrossed the Yellowstone Plateau every year and searched every crevice for gold and other precious minerals. Although gold was found nearby, no big strikes were ever made inside what is now Yellowstone National Park.

## Expeditions "Discover" Yellowstone

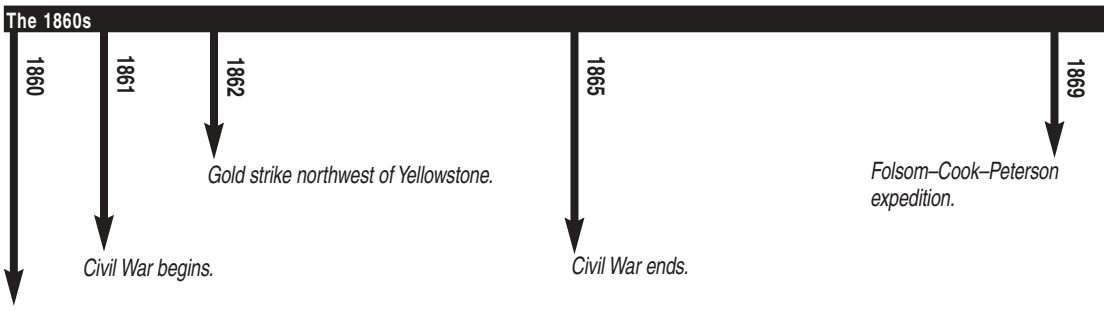
Although Yellowstone had been thoroughly tracked by trappers and tribes, in the view of the nation at large it was really "discovered" by formal expeditions. The first organized attempt came in 1860 when Captain William F. Raynolds led a military expedition, but it was unable to explore the Yellowstone Plateau because of late spring snow. The Civil War preoccupied the government during the next few years. Afterward, several explorations were planned but none actually got underway.

*On the south border of this lake is a number of hot and boiling springs some of water and others of most beautiful fine clay and resembles that of a mush pot and throws its particles to the immense height of from twenty to thirty feet in height.*

—from Daniel Potts, in a letter to a Philadelphia newspaper, 1827

# 1

## History of the Park




*This photo of Tower Fall was one of many taken by W.H. Jackson during the 1871 expedition. His photos helped to bring public attention to the wonders of Yellowstone. Both the 1870 and 1871 expeditions spread the word through newspaper and magazine articles, speaking tours, and other publicity.*

### *The 1869 Folsom-Cook-Peterson Expedition*

In 1869, three members of one would-be expedition set out on their own. David E. Folsom, Charles W. Cook, and William Peterson ignored the warning of a friend who said their journey was "the next thing to suicide" because of "Indian trouble" along the way. From Bozeman, they traveled down the divide between the Gallatin and Yellowstone rivers, crossed the mountains to the Yellowstone and continued into the present park. They observed Tower Fall, the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone—"this masterpiece of nature's handiwork"—continued past Mud Volcano to Yellowstone Lake, then south to West Thumb. From there, they visited Shoshone Lake and the geyser basins of the Firehole River. The expedition updated an earlier explorer's map (DeLacy, in 1865), wrote an article in *Western Monthly* magazine, and refueled the excitement of scientists who decided to see for themselves the truth of the party's tales of "the beautiful places we had found fashioned by the practiced hand of nature, that man had not desecrated."

### *The 1870 Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition*

In August 1870, a second expedition set out for Yellowstone, led by Surveyor-General Henry D. Washburn, politician and businessman Nathaniel P. Langford, and attorney Cornelius Hedges. Lt. Gustavus C. Doane provided military escort from Fort Ellis (near present-day Bozeman, Montana). The explorers traveled to Tower Fall, Canyon, and Yellowstone Lake, followed the lake's eastern and southern shores, and explored the Lower, Midway, and Upper geyser basins (where they named Old Faithful). They climbed several peaks, descended into the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, and attempted measurements and analyses of several of the prominent natural features.

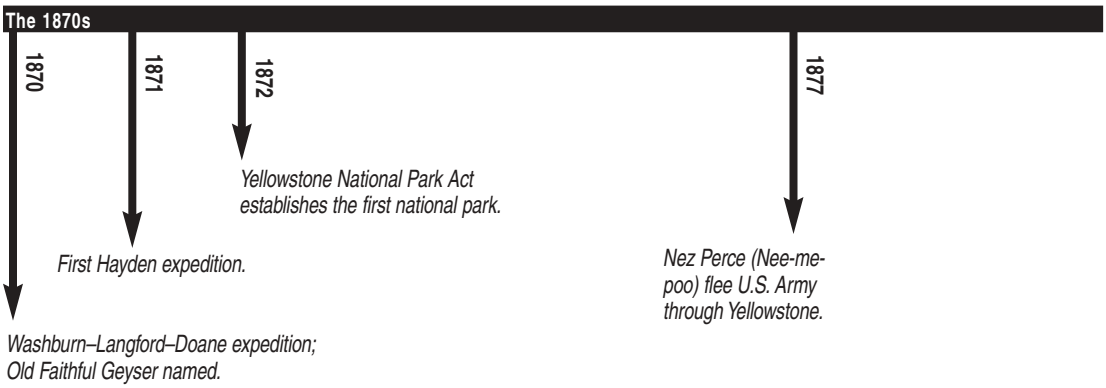
### *The 1871 Hayden Expedition*

Ferdinand V. Hayden, head of the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, led the next scientific expedition in 1871, simultaneous with a survey by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Hayden Survey brought back scientific corroboration of the earlier tales of thermal activity. The expedition gave the world an improved map of Yellowstone and visual proof of the area's unique curiosities through the photographs of William Henry Jackson and the art of Henry W. Elliot and Thomas Moran. The expedition's reports excited the scientific community and aroused even more national interest in Yellowstone.

## 1872—Birth of a National Park

The crowning achievement of Yellowstone's explorers was helping to save Yellowstone from private development. They promoted a park bill in Washington in late 1871 and early 1872 that drew upon the precedent of the Yosemite Act of 1864, which reserved Yosemite Valley from settlement and entrusted it to the care of the state of California. To permanently close to settlement an expanse of the public domain the size of Yellowstone would depart from the established policy of transferring public lands to private ownership. But the wonders of Yellowstone—shown through Jackson's photographs, Moran's paintings, and Elliot's sketches—had caught the imagination of both the public and Congress. On March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Act into law. The world's first national park was born.




## The Formative Years

The park's promoters envisioned Yellowstone National Park would exist at no expense to the government. Nathaniel P. Langford, member of the Washburn expedition and advocate of the Yellowstone National Park Act, was appointed to the unpaid post of superintendent. Because he received no salary, he earned his living elsewhere. He entered the park twice during five years in office—as part of the 1872 Hayden expedition and to evict a squatter in 1874. His task was made more difficult by the lack of laws protecting wildlife and other natural features.

Political pressure forced Langford's removal in 1877. The next year, Congress authorized a salary for the next superintendent and appropriations "to protect, preserve, and improve the Park."

Philetus W. Norris was appointed the second superintendent. He constructed roads, built a park headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs, hired the first "gamekeeper," and waged a difficult campaign against hunters and vandals. Much of the primitive road system he laid out remains today as the Grand Loop Road. Through constant exploration, Norris also added immensely to geographical knowledge of the park.

Norris's tenure occurred during an era of warfare between the United States and many Native American tribes. To reassure the public that they faced no threat from these conflicts, he promoted the idea that Native Americans shunned this area because they feared the hydrothermal features, especially the geysers. This idea belied evidence to the contrary that from trappers and early explorers, but the myth spread.

Norris fell victim to political maneuvering and was removed from his post in 1882. He was succeeded by three powerless superintendents who could not protect the park.

Even when ten assistant superintendents were authorized to act as police, they failed to stop the destruction of wildlife. Poachers, squatters, woodcutters, and vandals ravaged Yellowstone.

### Touring the Park

*During the early years, visitation remained low because access to and travel within the park were difficult. Visitors either had to transport themselves or patronize one of the costly transportation enterprises. Once in the park, they found only a few concessioners providing food and minimal sleeping accommodations. Access improved in 1883 when the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Cinnabar, Montana, a new town near the north entrance of Yellowstone.*

*A typical tour began when visitors descended from the train in Cinnabar, boarded large "tally ho" stagecoaches (above), and headed up the scenic Gardner River Canyon to Mammoth Hot Springs. After checking into the large hotel, they spent the afternoon touring the hot springs. For the next four days, tourists bounced along in passenger coaches called "Yellowstone wagons," which had to be unloaded at steep grades. Each night visitors enjoyed a warm bed and a lavish meal at a grand hotel.*

*These visitors carried home unforgettable memories of experiences and sights, and they wrote hundreds of accounts of their trip. They recommended the tour to their friends, and each year more of them came to Yellowstone to see its wonders themselves. When the first automobile entered in 1915, Yellowstone truly became a national park, accessible to anyone who could afford a car.*

# 1

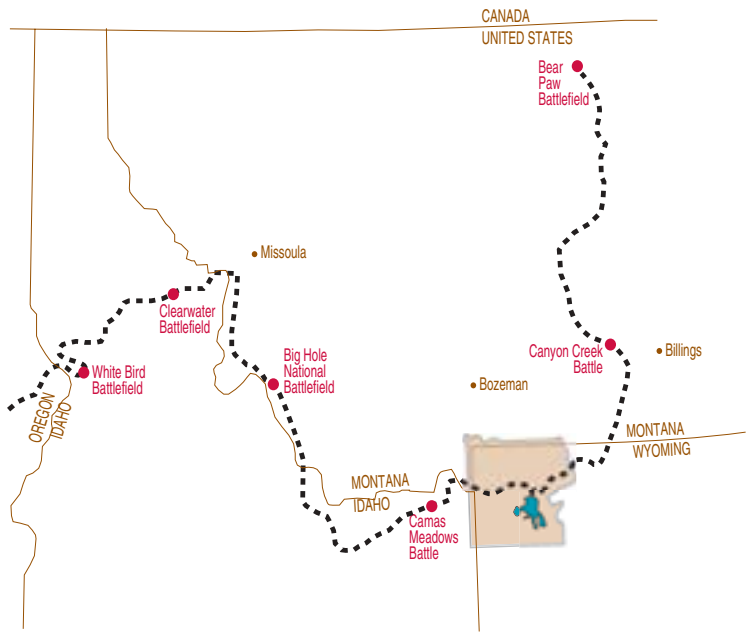
## History of the Park

**The 1880s & 1890s**

**1883** — *Northern Pacific Railroad reaches the North Entrance of the park.*

**1886** — *The U.S. Army arrives to administer the park. They stay until 1918.*

**1894** — *Poacher Ed Howell captured; Lacey Act passed.*




*In August 1877, the Nez Perce crossed Yellowstone as they fled the U.S. Army. The dotted line on the map traces their 1,170 mile ill-fated flight from Oregon to the end near Canada.*

### Flight of the Nez Perce

*Summer 1877 brought tragedy to the Nez Perce (or Nee-me-poo). On June 15 of that year, a band of 800 men, women, and children—plus almost 2,000 horses—fled their homeland in what is now Oregon and Idaho toward Canada. Settlers were moving into their homeland and the U.S. Government was trying to force them onto a reservation. At Big Hole, Montana, many of their group, including women and children, were killed in a battle with the Army. The remainder of the group continued fleeing, and entered Yellowstone National Park on the evening of August 23rd. During the two weeks they crossed the park, the Nez Perce encountered all 25 people known to be visiting the new park at that time, some more than once. Warriors took hostage or attacked several of these tourist parties. The group continued traveling through the park and over the Absaroka Mountains into Montana. The Army stopped them in the foothills of the Bear's Paw Mountains, less than 40 miles from the Canadian border, in October. Some Nez Perce escaped into Canada, but the remaining 350 tribal members surrendered after a six-day battle. This is where Chief Joseph spoke his famous words, "From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever." The 1,170-mile flight had ended.*

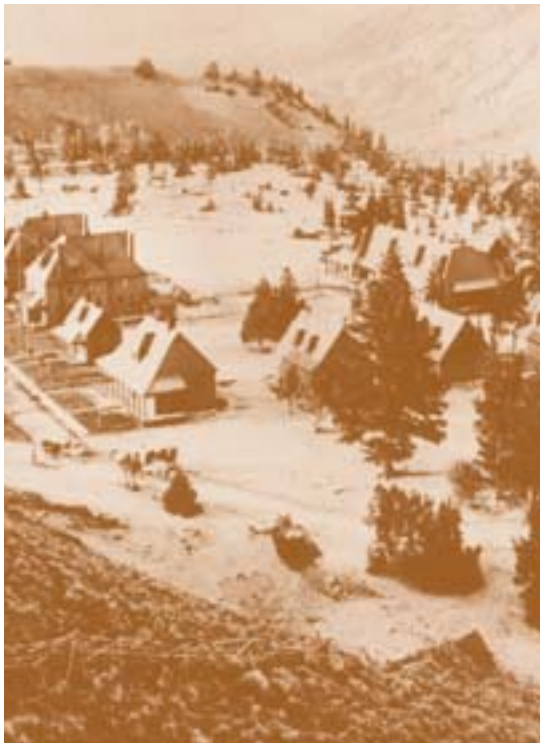
*Today, the flight of the Nez Perce is commemorated at 38 sites in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana as part of the Nez Perce National Historical Park. Some of these sites are shown above; to learn more about the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, visit the website at www.fs.fed.us/npnht.*

### 1886—The Army Arrives

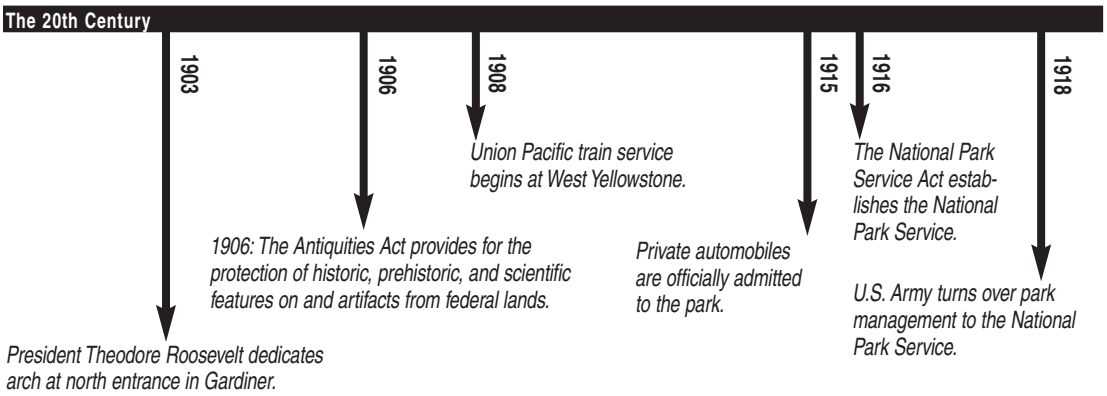
In 1886 Congress refused to appropriate money for ineffective administration. The Secretary of the Interior, under authority previously given by the Congress, called on the Secretary of War for assistance. On August 20, 1886, the U.S. Army took charge of the administration and protection of Yellowstone.

The Army strengthened regulations, posted them around the park, and enforced them. Troops guarded the major attractions and evicted troublemakers, and cavalry patrolled the vast interior of the park.

The most persistent menace came from poachers, whose activities threatened to exterminate animals such as the bison. In 1894, soldiers arrested a man named Ed Howell for slaughtering bison in Pelican Valley. The maximum sentence possible was



*Fort Yellowstone at Mammoth Hot Springs as it looked around 1895. Some of its buildings remain today and serve as park headquarters.*




*Soldiers pose with bison heads captured from poacher Ed Howell. When Howell returned to the park later that year, he was the first person arrested and punished under the new National Park Protection Act, passed in 1894.*

banishment from the park. A prominent journalist was present and wired the story to his Chicago editor who published it. The report created a national outcry. Within two months Congress acted—the National Park Protection Act (the Lacey Act) was passed, finally providing teeth for protecting Yellowstone's treasures.

Running a park was not the Army's usual line of work. The troops could protect the park and ensure access, but they could not fully satisfy the visitor's desire for knowledge. Moreover, each of the 14 other national parks established during this period was separately administered, resulting in uneven management, inefficiency, and a lack of direction.

*When Frances Pound applied for a law enforcement position in 1926, Superintendent Albright suggested she use her nickname, "Jim," because she would be one of the first women hired to do law enforcement in Yellowstone.*

## 1916: The National Park Service Begins

National parks clearly needed coordinated administration by professionals attuned to the special requirements of these preserves. Accordingly, in 1916, Congress passed the National Park Service Act, creating the National Park Service.

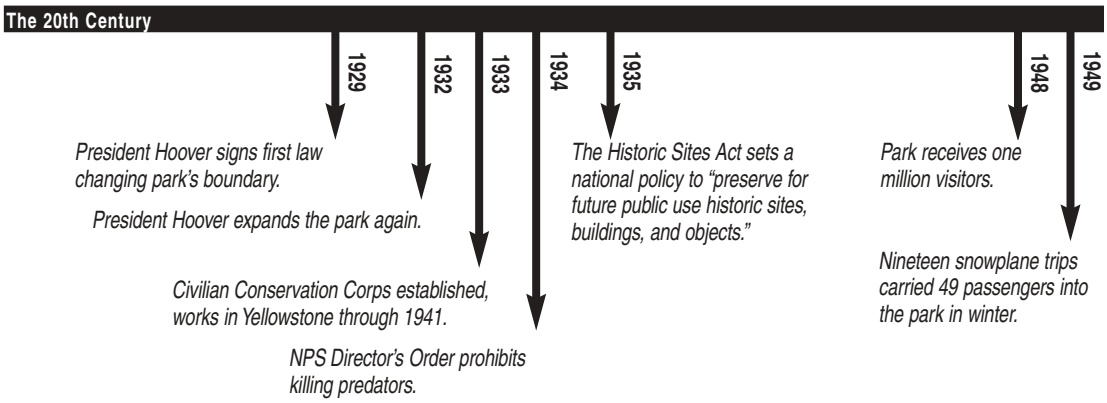
Yellowstone's first rangers, which included veterans of Army service in the park, became responsible for Yellowstone in 1918. The park's first superintendent under the new National Park Service was Horace M. Albright, who served simultaneously as assistant to Stephen T. Mather, Director of the National Park Service. Albright established a framework of management that guided administration of Yellowstone for decades.

### The National Park Service Act

*Passed in 1916, this law created the National Park Service and established its mission:*

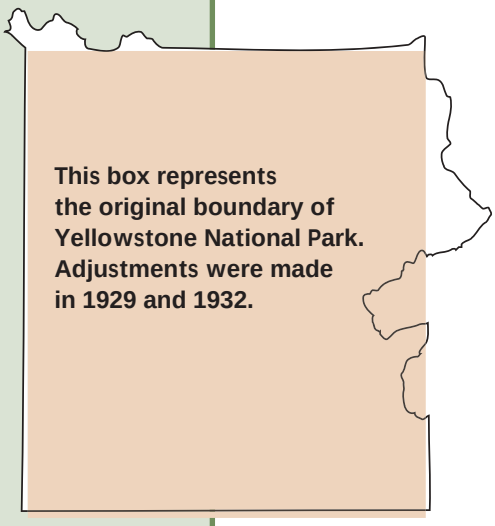
*"to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."*

Updated mission statement on page 9.




## Boundary Adjustments

Almost as soon as the park was established, people began suggesting that the boundaries be revised to conform more closely to natural topographic features, such as the ridgeline of the Absaroka Range along the east boundary. Although these people had the ear of influential politicians, so did their opponents—which at one time also included the United States Forest Service. Eventually a compromise was reached and in 1929, President Hoover signed the first bill changing the park's boundaries: The northwest corner now included a significant area of petrified trees; the northeast corner was defined by the watershed of Pebble Creek; the eastern boundary included the headwaters of the Lamar River and part of the watershed of the Yellowstone River. (The Yellowstone's headwaters remain outside the park in Bridger-Teton National Forest.)




In 1932, President Hoover added more than 7,000 acres between the north boundary and the Yellowstone River, west of Gardiner. These lands provided winter range for elk, pronghorn, and other ungulates.

Efforts to exploit the park also expanded during this time. Water users from the town of Gardiner to the potato farmers of Idaho wanted the park's water. Proposals included damming the southwest corner of the park—the Bechler region. The failure of these schemes confirmed that Yellowstone's wonders were so special that they should be forever preserved from exploitation.

## The 1940s

World War II drew away employees, visitors, and money from all national parks, including Yellowstone. The park's employees, who at this time were mostly men, were pulled away for military service. Visitors were few due to gasoline and other commodity rationing. The money needed to maintain the park's facilities, much less construct new ones, was directed to the war effort. Among other projects, the road from Old Faithful to Craig Pass was left unfinished.

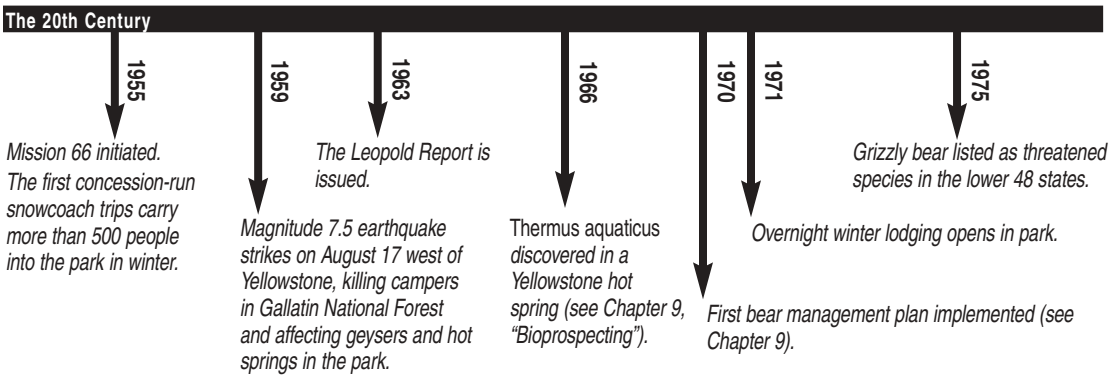
Proposals again surfaced to use the park's natural resources—this time in the war effort. As before, the park's wonders spoke for themselves and were preserved.

Visitation jumped as soon as the war ended. By 1948, park visitation reached one million people per year. The park's budget did not keep pace, and the neglect of the war years quickly caught up with the park.

## Mission 66

In 1955 the National Park Service initiated a program to address backlogged construction and maintenance and to provide modern facilities for the traveling public. The program was targeted for completion by 1966, the golden anniversary of the National Park Service, and was called Mission 66.

In Yellowstone, the Canyon Area was redeveloped as part of Mission 66. Visitor facilities were designed to reflect American attitudes of the 1950s: Anything "old" had no value or relevance in "modern" times, and convenience was paramount. Visitor services were arranged around a large parking plaza with small cabins a short distance away. Canyon Village opened in July 1958, the first Mission 66 project completed by the National Park Service.




## From Managed to "Natural"

Until the mid 1960s, park managers actively managed the elk and bison of Yellowstone. Elk population limits were determined according to formulas designed to manage livestock range. When elk reached those limits, park managers "culled" or killed the animals to reduce the population. Bison were likewise heavily managed.

In 1963, a national park advisory group, comprised of prominent scientists, released a report recommending parks "maintain biotic associations" within the context of their ecosystem, and based on scientific research. Known as the Leopold Report, this document established the framework for park management still used today throughout the National Park System. By adopting this new management philosophy, Yellowstone went from an unnatural managing of resources to "natural regulation"—today known as Ecological Process Management.

The Leopold Report's recommendations were upheld by the 2002 National Academy of Science report, *Ecological Dynamics On Yellowstone's Northern Range.*

## Complex Times

Although change and controversy have occurred in Yellowstone since its inception, the last three decades have seen many issues arise. Most involve natural resources, and those still current are described elsewhere in the book *(see list at right).*

In an effort to resolve park management issues throughout the system, Congress passed the The National Parks Omnibus Management Act in 1998. This law mandates the use of high quality science from inventory, monitoring, and research to understand and manage park resources.

One issue resolved was the threat of water pollution from a gold mine outside the northeast corner of the park. Among other concerns, the New World Mine would have sited waste storage along the headwaters of Soda Butte Creek, which flows into the Lamar River and then the Yellowstone River. After years of public debate, a federal buyout of the mining company was authorized in 1996.

Park facilities, underfunded for decades, are seeing some improvements due to a change in how such projects can be funded. In 1994, as part of a national pilot program, Yellowstone National Park was authorized to increase its entrance fee and retain more than half of the fee for park projects. (Previously, none of the entrance fees specifically funded projects in Yellowstone.) Projects being funded, in part, by this program include a major renovation of Canyon Visitor Education Center and development of new geology exhibits, campground and amphitheater upgrades, preservation of rare documents, and studies on bison.

### A Decade of Environmental Laws

*Beginning in the late 1960s, the U.S. Congress passed an unprecedented suite of laws to protect the environment. The laws described here particularly influence the management of our national parks.*

***The National Environmental Policy Act,*** *passed in 1969, establishes a national policy "to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment...stimulate the health and welfare of man…and enrich the understanding of ecological systems…" It requires detailed analysis of environmental impacts of any major federal action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment. Environmental assessments (EAs) and environmental impact statements (EISs) are written to detail these analyses and to provide forums for public involvement in management decisions.*

***The Endangered Species Act*** *(1973) requires federal agencies to protect species that are (or are likely to become) at risk of extinction throughout all or a significant part of their range. It prohibits any action that would jeopardize their continued existence or result in the destruction or modification of their habitat.*

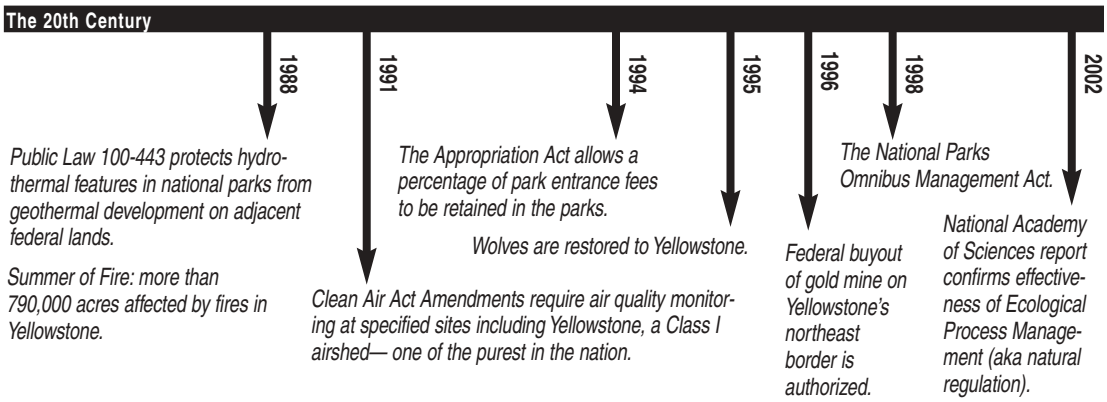
***The Clean Water Act*** *(1977) is enacted to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters" by prohibiting the discharge of pollutants.*

***The Clean Air Act*** *(1977) mandates protection of air quality in all units of the National Park System; Yellowstone is classified as Class 1, the highest level of clean air protection.*

### For Information on Current Issues

*Fire Management (and the fires of 1988): Chapter 6*

*Bioprospecting, bison management, lake trout and other aquatic concerns, and winter use: Chapter 9.*




## The Legacy of Yellowstone

The years have shown that the legacy of those who worked to establish Yellowstone National Park in 1872 was far greater than simply preserving a unique landscape. This one act has led to a lasting concept—the national park idea. This idea conceived wilderness to be the inheritance of all people, who gain more from an experience in nature than from private exploitation of the land.

The national park idea was part of a new view of the nation's responsibility for the public domain. By the end of the 19th century, many thoughtful people no longer believed that wilderness should be fair game for the first person who could claim and plunder it. They believed its fruits were the rightful possession of all the people, including those yet unborn. Besides the areas set aside as national parks, still greater expanses of land were placed into national forests and other reserves so that the country's natural wealth—in the form of lumber, grazing, minerals, and recreation lands—should not be consumed at once by the greed of a few, but should perpetually benefit all people.

The preservation idea, born in Yellowstone, spread around the world. Scores of nations have preserved areas of natural beauty and historical worth so that all humankind will have the opportunity to reflect on their natural and cultural heritage and to return to nature and be spiritually reborn. Of all the benefits resulting from the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, this may be the greatest.

## For More Information

Yellowstone National Park website, www.nps.gov/yell.

*Yellowstone Science*, free from the Yellowstone Center for Resources, in the Yellowstone Research Library, or online at www.nps.gov/yell.

*Yellowstone Today,* distributed at entrance gates and visitor centers.

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